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[AN NOT A MACHINE,

BUT

A RESPONSIBLE FREE AGENT.

BY THE

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"CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE IN RELATION TO MODERN THOUGHT,"

(*Being the Bampton Lecture for* 1877,)

"THE JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS," ETC.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Argument of the Tract.

The appeal is made to common sense against the prevalent materialistic, necessitarian philosophy, theological necessitarianism being excluded from the discussion. What is meant by a free agent is explained, and the limits of human freedom are defined. The necessitarian position, that every thing in man is the result of the conjoint action of matter and force, and therefore necessarily what his bodily organization makes him, and nothing more is stated, and that of the believers in man's free agency is defined. Free agency is shown to be the direct affirmation of our consciousness. We are shown to have a power of originating action. The validity of various objections is examined. The truth of free agency is proved from the universal belief of civilized man, especially as it has been registered in the structure of language and from an analysis of duty as affirmed by conscience. Obligation must centre in a Being external to ourselves. Both we ourselves who owe, and the Being to whom we owe, must be possessed of a moral nature, *i.e.*, both must be free agents.

A summary of the testimony of the past experience of mankind to free agency is given. Various materialistic theories on the subject are refuted. The distinction between physical and moral agents, instinctively and universally felt, is pointed out. The issues of the necessitarian philosophy are indicated. The basis of moral obligation according to this philosophy is examined, and what would be the practical effects of utilitarianism, were it generally accepted, set forth. The self-destructive character of necessitarian philosophy, and the fact that God alone can estimate the degree of responsibility attaching to each individual are shown. The confidence is expressed that God will judge and act aright.

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A RESPONSIBLE FREE AGENT.

WIDESPREAD philosophy at the present day affirms that there is no distinction between the forces which energize in the material and in the moral universe; but that both are alike subject to an iron law of necessity. It teaches that man is the result of the conjoint action of those necessary forces of nature, by which his physical frame has been built up, and of the surroundings in the midst of which he is placed; that he has no power of determining his own actions, but that they are determined for him by the conditions of his birth and his environment; that he cannot help acting in conformity with the impulse which happens to be the strongest; and that if all these conditions could be perfectly known, every action of every individual could be predicted beforehand with the same certainty as an astronomer predicts the occurrence of

No distinction between material and moral forces according to a widespread philosophy.

If this philosophy be true, man is a machine.

an eclipse. From this it follows, if this philosophy is a true account of the realities of things, that man is as much a machine as a steam engine; and that the hitherto accepted idea, that he is a free agent and a responsible moral being, is a delusion.

As long as paradoxes of this kind are confined to the closets of a few speculators, they may safely be left to be dealt with by the common sense of mankind; but when they are loudly proclaimed on the house-tops, as furnishing the true account of the moral nature of man, upon the authority of a number of well-known and imposing names in philosophy and science, and a system of ethics is erected on them, which is declared to be the destined Gospel of the future, it is impossible any longer to treat the subject with indifference, for it is only too evident that if such views are generally embraced as true they will not only be subversive of Christianity, but of the accepted principles of moral obligation and of the very foundations on which society rests. Let us therefore inquire as briefly as we can into their validity, not in terms of high philosophy, but in such as will be intelligible to men of ordinary understanding. But, inasmuch as great confusion of thought has been introduced into this controversy by a lax use of language, it will be necessary before entering on the argument to lay down clearly what we mean when we affirm that man is a free agent.

Reason why the subject cannot be treated with indifference.

What is meant by the affirmation that man is a free agent.

1. We mean that man is not bound by the iron

law by which necessary agents are bound; but that he is an agent free to adopt, or to forbear adopting, a particular course of action, according to the dictates of his reason; and that he is capable of choosing between the different impulses and motives which urge him to action, and of acting on one, and of declining to act on others. This power is what we mean when in philosophical language we speak of the freedom of the will.

He is free to adopt or not a particular course.

2. We affirm that man possesses a power of self-determination, that the possession of such a power by an agent is essential to constitute an action moral; and that without it there can be neither morality nor responsibility. Our position is that the universe consists of two factors: one, consisting of that in which necessary law reigns, and where the agents cannot act otherwise than they do; the other, where they are capable of exercising choice. To the latter we attribute responsibility, to the former none.

He possesses the power of self-determination.

3. But as necessitarians urge that the doctrine of the freedom of the will is equivalent to affirming that man can act without a motive; that he has a power of modifying his character according to his pleasure; that he can pursue any course of action he pleases; and that it also subjects human action to the dominion of caprice, and even makes man a creator of force, it becomes necessary to lay down clearly the real position which is taken

Allegations of necessitarians.

on all these points by those who affirm that man is a free agent.

Limitations of human freedom.

(1.) I observe that in affirming human freedom, it is by no means intended to assert that this freedom is devoid of limitations. All that is intended is, that within certain limits, man possesses such an amount of freedom as is sufficient to constitute him a responsible agent; and that where his freedom ceases, his responsibility ceases also. What we assert is, that we are capable of choosing between different motives and impulses to action; and that we are under no constraining necessity to yield to what is commonly called the strongest motive, which, in the language of this philosophy, really means the impulse which, by its gratification, would afford the greatest amount of pleasure. We also affirm that the power of motives to act on the will cannot be estimated by a common measure, such as the amount of pleasure with which the gratification of this or that impulse is attended; but that motives differ not only in intensity, but in kind, some appealing to the higher, and some to the lower principles of our nature; that our reason is capable of discriminating between these different classes of motives, and that our power of volition enables us to choose the higher, though the pleasure which attends their gratification may be less, and to refuse to yield to the lower, though the pleasure with which the gratifi-

Where freedom ceases responsibility ceases.

Different kinds of motives.

cation of them would be attended, would be greater.

(2.) Further, the affirmation of the freedom of the will is by no means equivalent to the affirmation that the will is capable of originating force; all that it affirms is, that it is capable of giving a direction to forces already existing, by diverting them from one direction, and turning them into another, in the same manner as the pointsman acts, who does not create force, but turns it into a particular direction.

The will cannot originate force, but only give direction to existing forces.

We also affirm that an act of volition is the invariable antecedent of all rational action; that our reason is capable of sitting in judgment on the character of our actions, of concentrating our attention on one set of motives, and of withdrawing it from another, in accordance with its judgments, thus rendering it possible for us to act on a higher motive, in preference to a lower and—in the sense above defined—a stronger one; and that our wills after adopting the decisions of our judgments, are capable of calling into activity, and of giving the proper direction to those forces which are necessary to realize them in action. Such an amount of freedom is necessary to constitute man a moral and responsible agent; and this being sufficient, it is unnecessary to claim more.

An act of volition the invariable antecedent of rational action

(3.) The affirmation that man is a free agent, is by no means equivalent to the assertion that he can

A free agent does not act without a motive.

act without a motive, *i.e.*, without something impelling him to action; all that it asserts is, that we possess a power of choosing between our different impulses and motives. We fully concede that without an impulse of some kind urging us to action, our minds must continue passive. But our impulses may be of the most divers kinds, and of different degrees of intensity, varying from those which instigate us to the most disinterested acts of self-sacrifice, to those which would impel us to the lowest forms of sensual gratification. In affirming, therefore, the freedom of the will, all that we assert is, that man possesses a power of choosing which of these classes of impulses he will gratify; and that he can restrain those which his reason rejects, and act on those which it approves; in a word, that he is under no compulsion, as animals are, to yield merely to the impulse which happens to be the strongest. Yet we fully admit, that such is the strength of the lower impulses of our nature, that they frequently overbear the decisions of our reason. But even here the principle of responsibility enters; for although the temptation may be strong, yet until the power of self-control has been destroyed by habitually yielding to it, we are conscious that we possess the power of rejecting the solicitations of our lower appetites, if it is our will so to do, and that it is a matter of experience that we at times actually do so.

Without an impulse the mind remains passive.

Man is under no compulsion to act in this way or that.

Solicitations of our lower appetites may be rejected.

An analysis of the mode in which temptation to evil gets the better of a man before he becomes utterly depraved, will make this plain. What is the course which it pursues? A desire for some gratification presents itself to the mind. The question immediately arises, shall we yield to the solicitation? Our conscience and moral sense say no, for it is wrong to do so. Our animal appetites say, it is pleasing, and urge us to the gratification. Are we then irresistibly impelled to yield to them? We all know that we are not. It is true that if we continue contemplating the pleasure with which the indulgence of the appetite would be attended, the yielding to the temptation will be the certain consequence. But if we cease to keep our minds fixed on the pleasure, and by a resolute act of will concentrate our attention on the great law of duty, this result need not follow. Such a power all of us are conscious not only of possessing, but of having actually exercised; and as long as we continue to exercise it, we are masters of our actions; but if we continue to contemplate the pleasure, and banish out of our minds the law of duty, we fully admit that the attempt to gratify the evil impulse is the inevitable result.

How temptation gets the better of a man.

How we overcome it.

The believers in free agency therefore fully concede that the repeated gratification of an evil passion gradually destroys the moral sense, and with it the power of resisting temptation. Of this

The moral sense and power of resistance destroyed by the repeated gratification of evil passion.

the habitual drunkard is a striking example. Such a character may be said in a certain sense to have ceased to be a free agent, and yet he is justly held to be responsible. His responsibility, however, accrued at an earlier stage, when, contrary to the dictates of his conscience and moral sense, he yielded to his evil impulses, and thereby destroyed his power of self-control. In such a case all that is necessary for the believer in human freedom to contend for is, that it was once in his power to refuse to gratify his evil appetites; and that if a man has formed a habit which has become irresistible, he is responsible for all the consequences which it was in his power to have foreseen. In this case, therefore, our position is that man possesses such an amount of freedom, that he is the master of his actions, until by his own act he has destroyed his power of self-control. What, therefore, we affirm is, not that a man can act without a motive, but that he can choose between one motive and another, by concentrating his attention on one, and withdrawing it from the other, and that he can do this until by his own voluntary acts he has destroyed his power of self-determination.

The responsibility of the self-incapacitated accrued at an earlier stage.

all men?

4. Nor is the assertion that man is a free agent equivalent to the affirmation that it is in his power to modify his character at his pleasure. Believers in human freedom recognize the following facts, which modify responsibility, but do not destroy it.

A free agent cannot modify his character at pleasure.

Facts which modify responsibility.

Conditions of birth.

(1.) That the conditions under which we are born, are wholly determined for us by a higher power; and consequently, *so far as our characters are determined by them,* our responsibility is modified.

Inherited appetences and tendencies.

(2.) That we are born with certain inherited appetences and tendencies which are entirely independent of our choice; and consequently, *so far as our actions are the inevitable results of these,* we are irresponsible.

Variations of moral character.

(3.) That it is a matter of unquestionable fact that men not only greatly vary in intellectual power, but also in that fundamental groundwork on which their moral characters are subsequently erected, some being from their earliest childhood more inclined to good, and some to particular vices than others; consequently, *so far as our actions are directly influenced by these variations,* it modifies our responsibility as individuals.

Transmitted habits.

(4.) That habits formed by ancestors are in some mysterious way transmissible to their descendants, not as formed habits, but as tendencies to particular classes of actions, which tendencies act in a manner somewhat analogous to instincts. This transmission, however, is very far from being invariable; and in the present state of our knowledge, we are entirely ignorant of the law in conformity with which it acts. The fact, however, is undoubted, that habits formed by parents, not unfrequently appear as tendencies to particular classes of action

in their children; and *when this is so, in as far as they are quite independent of their choice,* it modifies responsibility.

The moral atmosphere in which a man has been born and educated exerts an influence on his character.

(5.) A very important influence is exerted on the character of the individual by the moral atmosphere in which he has been born and educated. This fact frequently makes the precise degree of responsibility which attaches to a particular person a very complicated question. External circumstances also of various kinds, such as climate, exert a certain amount of influence on the formation of character. These, therefore, *as far as they are independent of our choice,* modify our responsibility.

Habits of evil.

(6.) The action of completely formed habits is almost instinctive; and it is an unquestionable fact that habits of evil, when fully formed, paralyze the will. In this case, therefore, although it is impossible for human laws to recognize such qualifications of responsibility (which can be only justly estimated by the all-seeing eye), the degree of responsibility for a particular act on the part of the individual, *is only in the degree in which he has contributed to the formation of the habit* by habitually yielding to temptations which it was once in his power to resist.

Illustrations.

A few illustrations will set the above positions in a clear light.

Variations of intellectual capacity.

It is unquestionable that men vary greatly in intellectual capacity, and that over these variations they exert no control. But our intellectual and

moral being constitute a unity; and the imperfections of our intellects affect our moral judgments, and the actions which are consequent on them. To take an extreme case, insanity. There it is universally allowed that an intellectual defect renders the subject of it irresponsible. Consequently, minor degrees of this imperfection must modify our responsibility in a corresponding ratio. Such imperfections, being independent of our wills, are not our sins, but our misfortunes.

Insanity renders its victim irresponsible.

Again, with respect to children. No one who has made them the subject of careful observation, can doubt that they are born with fundamental differences of disposition. Thus their tempers greatly vary even in early infancy. To some it is natural to speak the truth, others display an inherent tendency to falsehood. The same remark is true with respect to a large number of other moral characteristics. Such tendencies manifest themselves long before that stage of mental development is attained which is necessary for constituting a man a responsible moral agent. These facts we are bound to recognize, and also the further fact that we have had no share in implanting these tendencies in ourselves. Consequently, as far as they have affected the formation of our characters, we are irresponsible for the influences which they exert. Yet while they modify, they do not destroy responsibility; for every one of us is conscious that when our rational

Differences of disposition in children.

Their early manifestation.

They modify but do not destroy responsibility

faculties have attained to their full development, we possess the power of modifying, and even of controlling our primary impulses, by means of the principle of habituation, a power which has been exercised in numerous cases.

The power of modifying character is the exclusive prerogative of man.

This power of modifying and of gradually altering character is the exclusive prerogative of man, and constitutes one of the great distinctions between responsible and irresponsible living agents. Animals cannot help acting on their impulses; and are incapable by their own inherent powers of modifying their instincts. I say, *by their own inherent powers*, for whatever modifications they are capable of, are acquired by a controlling power which is exerted over them by man, and not by a power which is inherent in themselves.

Animals unaided by man are incapable of self-improvement.

Thus all observation proves that an animal unaided by man is incapable of self-improvement, of modifying a natural tendency, or exerting a control over its actions. But such a power we are all conscious of possessing; and many of us, of having actually exerted. Man therefore possesses a power, within certain limits, of modifying his character and of regulating his actions.

Man is responsible for exerting his power of self-improvement, but not for his primary instincts and their necessary results.

So far then as he exerts, or neglects to exert this power, he is responsible, both for his character and his conduct; but for his primary instincts, and for his character and actions, *as far as they are the necessary result of these primary instincts*, he can possess no responsibility.

The effect which external circumstances, and the moral atmosphere in which men are born and educated, exert on our free agency, requires a few additional observations. It is an undoubted fact that a particular type of character is impressed on different races of men, the outlines of which are transmitted from generation to generation; of this the Negro race in Africa, the Bengalee in Asia, and the Gallic in Europe, are striking examples. Yet even this is by no means uniform, but varies within certain limits. It is no less true with respect to the masses of mankind, that in the moral atmosphere in which they have been born and educated, they for the most part live and die. But this, though for the most part true, is by no means invariably so. Numerous instances unquestionably have occurred, of men who have elevated themselves above, or who have sunk below, the condition of their birth and their environment. This proves that the results above referred to are not brought about by the action of a necessary law; for, if this were so, they would not happen for the most part, but invariably, like the results of the law of gravitation. Similarly, it has been urged, that it can be proved by statistics, that man is the creature of his surroundings; and that what we designate our wills, exert no power in determining our actions. Thus, for example, it is affirmed that the number of suicides which take

Race types of character.

Variations.

The masses of men live and die in the moral atmosphere in which they have been born and educated.

Numerous exceptions prove that this is not the result of the action of a necessary law.

The argument against free agency from statistics.

place in a particular country, varies with the population, and presents the same results year by year; that the same is true with respect to crimes generally; and that even the number of marriages, —a matter, in which it is alleged that will ought to exert great power—varies with the price of the necessaries of life. Hence the inference has been drawn, that our belief in free agency is a delusion.

The inference from statistics assumes the point at issue.

This inference assumes the point at issue. The statistics in question present us with the combined result of our impulses, our wills, and of the influences which are exerted over us by external circumstances. The argument owes all its plausibility to the most incorrect assumption that the believers in free agency affirm that the will acts at hap-hazard, or by caprice. But further: the inference itself is an incorrect deduction from the facts, for although the numbers in question closely approximate to each other from year to year, they are by no means identical, which they ought to be, if necessary law was the dominant power in human life. The above arguments therefore wholly fail to prove that man is not free to act, or to forbear acting, within certain definite limits; and no rational believer in human freedom wishes to affirm that our power of self-determination is devoid of limitations.[1]

Free will not capricious.

Yearly statistics not identical as they would be if necessary law were dominant in human life.

[1] I am here referring to the positions which have been set forth by Mr. Buckle and other similar writers.

Such are the facts of our moral nature as they bear on the doctrine of free agency. It has been necessary to set them thus definitely before the reader, because the reasonings of necessitarians owe no small portion of their plausibility to the mis-statements of the views of their opponents. The facts, as above explained we admit, but the inferences which have been deduced from them we deny. Our position is, that while they modify responsibility, and render it difficult, even impossible, for man to determine its precise amount in numerous individual cases, they by no means destroy it. We freely concede that man is not able to do everything which he pleases—there are limits to his freedom, and circumstances in the formation of his character, over which he can exert no control, which modify his responsibility; but he has a sufficient amount of freedom within these limits to constitute him a free responsible agent.

Admitted facts modify but do not destroy responsibility.

Man has sufficient freedom to constitute him a free agent.

Having thus defined the positions which are taken by the believers in the free agency of man, it will be necessary to set before the reader those of philosophical necessitarians whose theories we are controverting.

Their position admits of being very briefly stated. According to them, everything in man is the result of the conjoint action of matter and force, and he is necessarily that which his bodily organization makes him, and nothing more. They

The position of philosophical necessitarians of the present day.

contend, therefore, that as matter and force are necessary agents, man, being their product, must be a necessary agent. Otherwise it would be possible for an agent to evolve out of itself what was never in itself, a position which we readily admit is intrinsically absurd, for it is obvious that necessary and free agency cannot co-exist in the same subject. This philosophy, therefore, let it be observed, rests not on facts, but on assumptions and *a priori* reasonings; and on the strength of these, it calls on us to reject the clearest intuitions of our consciousness. We, on the contrary, contend that it contradicts the great facts of human nature, and the universal experience of mankind. Let us, therefore, consider the grounds on which the overwhelming majority of the human race have in all ages believed, and still continue to believe, themselves to be free, and not necessary agents.

This philosophy rests on *a priori* reasonings and assumptions.

Free agency the direct affirmation of our consciousness.

1. Our free agency is a direct affirmation of our consciousness, *i.e.*, we know that we are free agents; in other words, we are certain that when an impulse to a particular course of action presents itself, it is in our power to enter on it, or to forbear. A brief analysis of our various mental acts, prior to our engaging in action, will establish this beyond a doubt. What then is the line of conduct which we pursue? When an impulse to engage in a course of action presents itself, before we engage in it, we

Analysis of our mental acts before engaging in action.

deliberate on its desirability. If different impulses present themselves, our reason sits in judgment on their various suggestions, and pronounces in favour of one and against others, according to its sense of fitness. This act of judgment is followed by an act of volition, in which we determine to adopt the course of action to which our reason has assented. Then it is, but not till then, that we set in motion the secret springs of our activity, and attempt to carry the action thus determined on into execution. Of all these processes our consciousness is direct; and each, and every one of them, we can verify for ourselves by a careful observation of our own minds. Every step in them, therefore, proves that we are free, and not necessary agents, for the idea that a necessary agent can either deliberate or choose is an absurdity. Further: a necessary agent is incapable of being tempted to break the law of its being, on it temptations will not act; but although the moral law is the law of man's being, and that which his conscience tells him that he ought to obey, he is capable of breaking it. Such a power is only consistent with his being a free, and not a necessary agent.

Judgment of our reason.

An act of volition follows

We are conscious of these processes.

They prove our freedom.

A necessary agent cannot break the law of its being.

In opposition to this direct testimony of consciousness, and as a set-off against it, necessitarians affirm that our various motives admit of being reduced to a common measure, viz., the pleasure which their gratification gives, or the desire of each

The necessitarian contention.

The power of motives in proportion to the pleasure anticipated from their gratification, according to necessitarians.

individual to realize his own greatest happiness; that motives do not differ in kind, but only in degree; and that their power to impel us to action is in exact proportion to our sense of the ultimate amount of pleasure which we think will result from their gratification. Hence the inference is drawn, that man cannot help acting on the strongest motive, *i.e.*, adopting that course of action which seems to promise him the greatest amount of pleasure; for, in the language of this philosophy, pleasure and happiness are identical. This being so, it is urged that we deceive ourselves in imagining that we exercise any real choice in determining the course of our actions; but, on the contrary, they are determined for us by the necessity of acting on the strongest motive, with the generation of which we have had nothing to do.

This philosophy allows that we have the power of choosing some distant good.

To this I reply, that even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that all motives can be measured by the common measure above referred to, still this philosophy allows that we possess the power of choosing some distant good, instead of giving way to an impulse which urges us to a great and immediate gratification. This alone is sufficient to prove that we possess a power which is capable of controlling our impulses and of choosing between our motives, and that we are under no necessity of yielding to the strongest. I say the strongest, because it is an unquestionable fact in human

nature that the impulses which prompt us to immediate indulgence are far more powerful factors to excite us to action than the contemplation of some distant good. Consequently, if the former are to yield to the latter, this can only be effected by the exertion of a powerful act of self-control. It follows, therefore, that the possession of this power, of which we all are conscious, proves that within certain limits we are free agents, because without freedom an act of self-control would be impossible, for the two stand to each other in as close a correlation as the concave and convex of a circle.

The possession of this power proves that we are free agents.

But we deny the truth of the position that our motives can be measured by the common principle above referred to, and that their power to produce action is in exact proportion to their intensity. On the contrary, we maintain that motives differ in kind as well as in degree, and that it is in our power to follow the suggestions of a higher motive of less, and to restrain a lower one, of greater intensity. What, I ask, does the position against which I am contending, invite us to believe? This and no other, viz., that the impulse which urges the drunkard to his bottle, and that which urges the martyr, out of regard to what he considers truth and duty, to yield himself to a torturing death when he could escape by an act of apostacy, can be measured by the common measure of self-gratifica-

Motives differ in kind as well as degree.

The drunkard and the martyr cannot be measured by the common measure of self-gratification.

tion; and that martyrdom is only one of the forms of self-love,—for this is what the pursuit of the greatest happiness really means. Such a position the common sense of mankind will pronounce to be incredible.

Objection answered.

It has been urged, however, that the martyr expects to be remunerated hereafter for his sufferings here, and consequently that after all he is only pursuing his own greatest happiness. But there have been self-sacrificers in the cause of what they believed to be truth and duty, who could see no prospect of reward in this life, and who had no *certain conviction* of the reality of one to come. Such was Socrates, who although he entertained a strong hope that he should survive the stroke of death, yet admitted that he was devoid of a full assurance that he would. The same is true of not a few who have had no belief in a future state. Does it, I ask, enter into the calculation of any one who leaps into the water at the hazard of his life to save a man from drowning, that he is realizing his greatest happiness by the act either in this world or in the next? He may think it noble to do so: he may think it his duty; something within him says, You ought to attempt to save that life at the hazard of your own; but a reference to his own greatest happiness never enters into his thoughts. If it did, instead of impelling him, it would deter him from the act.

Socrates had no certain anticipation of future reward.

The thought of happiness does not enter into the mind of the man who saves another's life at the risk of his own.

All human activity, it is true, originates in a desire to gratify some impulse of our nature; but it by no means follows that that impulse is a desire which terminates in self. If it did, self-sacrificers would be few.

We are conscious of the power of originating action.

2. Our consciousness is direct that we possess a power of originating action, and that we do originate action whenever we exert an act of will, or volition. It consists of two factors, the consciousness of an "I" or "Ego," as an existing entity, and that this "I" possesses the power of self-determination. But our consciousness of the I, or Ego, from which a sense of voluntary agency is indispensable, involves the belief in the existence of something which is not self, whereas over that which is non-self, our consciousness tells us that we can exert no direct control. Further: we possess a direct consciousness of *willing* to act, and that on doing so, action follows; and of *willing* not to act, and the springs of our activity stand motionless. Inasmuch, therefore, as no certainties can be greater than these different presentations of consciousness, it follows by inevitable necessity that they prove that man is a free, and not a necessary, agent.

We are conscious of willing to act or not to act.

It is objected that consciousness may be mistaken.

But it has been objected that consciousness may be, and frequently is, mistaken, and therefore that its presentations are no certain guide to truth. To this objection I reply by putting to those who urge

it the question, If the presentations of consciousness are no guides to truth, what better guides do we possess? For it is an indisputable fact that all reasoned truth, whether it be inductive or deductive, rests for its ultimate validity on some affirmation of our consciousness. This is true alike of the axioms of mathematics and of the information which is furnished by our senses. To the latter, consciousness is the sole witness; and with respect to the former, all truths which admit of proof must be deduced from higher truths which do not admit of proof, the truth of which is given in an act of consciousness, in which we see the truth of the affirmation in the clear light of intellectual vision; and which, owing to the fundamental constitution of our minds, we are incapable of believing to be otherwise than true. The denial of the validity of such truths therefore reduces the whole body of human knowledge to a mass of shapeless ruins, and renders it impossible to affirm of a single proposition that it is true or false; for even the affirmation that all human knowledge is invalid must involve the assumption of some proposition, the truth of which has no other foundation than the validity of some presentation of our consciousness. Of the truth of these, we are even more certain than we are of the existence of an external world, because our consciousness of the former is direct, whereas our belief in the existence of the latter is

All reasoned truth rests on some affirmation of our consciousness.

The denial of the validity of truths which do not admit of proof reduces all human knowledge to a mass of shapeless ruins.

an inference from the former. Further, as all knowledge which we derive from our senses depends on the validity of their presentations, and these can only be verified in an act of consciousness, it follows, if the primary affirmations of consciousness above referred to are not trustworthy, that all our knowledge of the external world must be equally untrustworthy. I need hardly say that such an affirmation saps the foundation on which not only the whole of physical science, but the whole course of human life is built, and is therefore incredible. We affirm, therefore, that the belief in our free agency rests on precisely the same foundation as that of our highest certainties; and if the belief in question is a delusion, all our other certainties must also be equally delusions.

If the primary affirmations of consciousness are untrustworthy, all our knowledge of the external world must be equally untrustworthy.

Belief in our free agency rests on the same foundation as our highest certainties.

From these considerations the following all-important conclusion follows. All reasonings which lead to conclusions which contradict the primary affirmations of our consciousness must be the result either of incorrect assumptions, or of some error in the intellectual processes by which they have been deduced. Consequently, all those processes of reasoning by which necessitarians endeavour to prove that man is not a free agent must be faulty somewhere; because they lead to conclusions which contradict the greatest of our certainties, viz., the direct affirmations of our consciousness. When, therefore, any one endeavours

Conclusion.

to prove that our belief that we are free agents is a delusion, ordinary men may with confidence reply to the necessitarian philosopher, We are inadequate judges of your abstract and complicated reasonings; but of one thing we are certain, viz., that your conclusions must be false, because they contradict the clearest affirmations of our consciousness, of the truth of which we are as certain as we are of our own existence, and far more certain than we are of yours. Such an answer will both approve itself to common sense, and stand the test of a sound philosophy.

The validity of the testimony of consciousness.

Let us now examine the validity of the objection above referred to, that our consciousness of an object does not prove its real existence. What then are the facts? for it is with facts and not with abstractions that we have to deal. I fully admit that our consciousness of an object does not necessarily prove that it has an existence external to the mind. It is an unquestionable fact that in numerous cases of mental disease, the mind is capable of presenting to itself images to which there is no external reality corresponding. But when reasoning on such a subject, the appeal lies, not to what the mind does when diseased, but to its action when sound. If it be asked, What is the criterion of mental soundness, I answer, the concurrent testimony of considerable numbers of men. When numbers thus concur in affirming

The appeal lies to the sound mind

that they perceive a particular object, we may safely conclude that it is no figment of the imagination. But if it be urged that instances have occurred where large numbers of enthusiasts have been the prey of delusions of this description, then the appeal lies to a still wider testimony, and finally to that of ninety-nine hundredths of mankind. When this concurs, the conclusion must be accepted as final.

The conclusion that must be regarded as final.

But the subject which we are now considering is independent of the question, whether the testimony of consciousness proves the existence of external realities corresponding to its presentations. In the present case we have only to do with internal facts; and respecting these its affirmations are necessarily valid. This is true even of the madman and the enthusiast, their mental eye really perceives the objects which they believe that they see. Their consciousness is not at fault; but their error consists in assigning to its presentations, an existence external to their minds. But in the case which we are considering, the testimony of our consciousness to our free agency has nothing to do with the existence of any thing external to ourselves; but it is strictly limited to testifying to the truth of an internal fact, that internal fact being the truth of its own perceptions. In a word, it testifies to what it sees, perceives, and feels. To all this, its testimony cannot but be valid. We

We have to do with internal facts.

The testimony of consciousness to our free agency has nothing to do with anything external to ourselves.

feel that we are free either to act or to forbear acting. Consciousness here testifies to a fact of the existence of which it is the one competent judge. The possession of such a power constitutes us responsible agents.

The structure of language bears witness to free agency

Next, let us consider the testimony which the structure of language gives to the great truth of man's free agency. Whatever may have been the original mode of communication among our primitive ancestors, it is an admitted fact among philologists that all existing languages, with the exception of a few root words, have been gradually elaborated by the human mind; and that in the course of this elaboration they have passed through various stages of development, of which their present forms are the result, and furnish us with the history. Language therefore constitutes a register of the universal experience of mankind. As such, it testifies to an all-important fact in this controversy, that those who have invented and developed its existing forms (the process was an unconscious one) have been unanimous in believing themselves to be free agents. So strongly has this belief impressed itself on its structure that the necessitarian, when he is engaged in arguing against free agency, is compelled to express himself in terms which take for granted the truth of the very thing which he is attempting to dispute; so completely has the belief in free agency held possession of man's entire

The necessitarian is compelled to express himself in terms which assume what he disputes in arguing against free agency.

sphere of thought. If necessitarianism is true, it will be necessary to reconstruct the forms of language, to bring them into harmony with its principles. A few examples of this its testimony will suffice as illustrations.

The pronoun "I" assumes our existence as self-determining agents.

The conception involved in the pronoun "I" assumes the existence of ourselves as conscious self-determining agents. It is impossible to use it in conjunction with any active verb without assuming this. What, I ask, do we mean, when we use such expressions as "I do this, or that," or "I will do this, or that," or "I will forbear to do this, or that"? It is evident that when we thus speak, we conceive of ourselves as being self-determining agents, and the voluntary causes of actions. Again, when we use the pronoun "my" we conceive of that being which we designate "self"[1] as the possessor of other things, which although most closely connected with ourselves, are yet distinct from ourselves. Thus we speak of our hands, our feet, our bodies, and our understandings. What, I ask,

The pronoun "my" assumes that we are possessors of things distinct from ourselves.

[1] I do not here undertake to define the metaphysical elements of self, or to determine how far these and various other things may constitute elements in self. All that I wish to observe is, that our ordinary consciousness affirms the existence of a substratum, in which those things exist, of which that consciousness is capable of predicating "My." This consciousness therefore affirms that something exists which we call "ourselves," which is distinct from that which we predicate "my," or in other words, that the self which possesses and the thing possessed cannot be identical.

do such expressions mean? Obviously, that we view the "I," or Ego, as the possessor of these things, and as the groundwork in which they subsist. Even writers who, like Mr. Mill and Mr. Spencer, deny the existence of free agency (for such a denial is involved in the denial of the existence of self as distinct from our ever varying acts of consciousness), are obliged to use language which involves an assumption which is directly contradictory to their own positions. Thus they affirm that what we are conscious of as ourselves, is nothing more than the sum total of our consciousness at any particular moment. But inasmuch as these consciousnesses are in a state of perpetual change, it follows, if ourselves and our different states of consciousness are identical, that that which we designate ourselves, can have no permanent existence. Yet they habitually speak of themselves as conscious of the past and as originators of action just like other men do. But further, it may be justly asked, How is it possible that the "I," or Ego, can be conscious of this or that, if the I is nothing but the consciousness itself; and that, too, a consciousness in a condition of perpetual flux; and which has no existence independent of it. Such writers, to be consistent, ought to substitute in their writings for the pronoun "I," the following complicated and cumbrous paraphrase, "The sum total of the consciousnesses at any particular moment, to

Mr. Mill and Mr. Spencer use language involving a direct contradiction of their own positions.

What they ought to substitute for the pronoun "I."

which the name of the writer is attached, does, thinks, feels, or possesses this or that." Common sense will have no difficulty in perceiving, if such a substitution were made, for example, in the writings of Mr. Spencer, consisting as they do of between four and five thousand pages, containing a large number of very complicated scientific terms very difficult to realize in definite thought, that it would have the effect of making a philosophy, already sufficiently cumbrous, a hundred times more cumbrous still. Nay more, if his language were in all other respects to be corrected, so as to make it an adequate expression of his dogmas, it would make his writings unintelligible to all, except those who are already imbued with his principles, if even it would convey any definite meaning to them.

The effect of such a substitution.

The previous considerations therefore render it certain that the fundamental groundwork of language is based on the assumption that the I or Ego is a self-determining agent, capable of volition and originating action. The contrary supposition involves the assumption that we are not agents, but things; not originators of action, but only capable of being acted on. If this is true philosophy, it is false to say, I did this, or that, the real fact being that something else did it; for, according to the theory I am combating, the I has no existence other than the ever-changing acts of consciousness, and is never active, but is

The groundwork of language based on the assumption that the Ego can will and originate action.

always passive. This being so, it will be necessary, if the language of the future is to be an accurate expression of the realities of things, that it should discontinue the use of every term which implies that man is a voluntary cause of action, and substitute the passive for the active verb, besides making other most important reforms in the structure of language.

Another set of terms which testify to the universal belief of mankind in free agency.

Further: there is another set of terms, such as I will, I can, I might, I could, I would, and I ought, which testify to the universal belief of mankind in their being free agents, and to their possession of a power of self-determination. So deeply are these terms incorporated into the structure of language, that it is impossible to write a paragraph of any length without using one or more of them. What then do they tell us respecting the opinions of those by whom language has been evolved? Obviously that they were believers in their own free agency; for every one of these terms assumes it, yet on the principles of the necessitarian philosophy they are devoid of meaning. Take, for example, the expression, I will. We not only use it in reference to the future, but to denote purpose and deliberate intention, *i.e.*, that it is our pleasure and firm determination to do some particular act. All such expressions would be meaningless, nay, misleading, if we were impelled to action by a power over

We use the expression "I will" to denote purpose and firm determination.

which we could exert no control. Moreover, a determined act of volition is capable of exerting such a power that it can overbear the strongest of our natural impulses. To enable a man to rule his fellows a strong will is indispensable. Similar observations are applicable to the other terms. Every one of them implies the consciousness of a power to act or to forbear acting. If, then, the necessitarian philosophy is a true account of the actualities of things, all men in all ages must have been the prey of one of the greatest and most incredible of delusions.

If necessitarianism is true, men in all ages must have been the prey of incredible delusion.

But the term, I ought, is so intimately connected with our conscience and moral nature, that it requires a separate consideration, owing to the fact that this controversy has been thrown into the utmost confusion by being mixed up with a variety of theories which have been propounded respecting the mode of their origination. Once more, therefore, I must ask the reader to observe, that in this discussion we have nothing to do with the question how these faculties may have originated. We are concerned only with what our consciousness testifies to existing facts, which will still be facts, whatever may have been the origin of our moral nature, even if it could be proved (which it certainly has not), that the original progenitor of man was some brutal ancestor. Further: our opponents are in the constant habit of ap-

The term "I ought."

We have nothing to do with the origin of our faculties in this discussion.

pealing to man in a savage state ; and they urge that savage man is devoid of such a conception as "I ought," and possesses no trace of a conscience. Many of the assertions which have been made on this subject have now been proved to be inaccurate ; but in this discussion let it be observed that the appeal lies, not to imperfect man, but to man in the full condition of his development as man, *i.e.*, to civilized man. Whatever, then, may be the condition of savages with respect to the conception of duty or oughtness, it is an indisputable fact that it is one which is possessed by all men who are in a state of civilization, account for its origin as we may. The only question, therefore, which concerns us in this controversy is, what do the conscience and moral sense of civilized man testify to existing fact? This is the real point at issue, and we must not allow our attention to be diverted from it.

The appeal is made to to civilized man.

What, then, do we mean when we say, "I ought?" We affirm that it is right to act in this or that particular manner; and that it is wrong not to do so. We are, in fact, presented with an alternative, a right and a wrong course of action. When, therefore, conscience says, "You ought," it decides in favour of one of these alternatives, and for the rejection of the other. But the being which is capable of choosing between two alternatives must be a free agent. Further: the con-

The meaning of the term "I ought."

ception "I ought," involves the contemplation of an ideal, which the Ego seeks to realize, and feels that it is bound to attempt to realize, but which it has the power of forbearing to do. The conception of "oughtness" therefore announces a law which we feel to be binding on ourselves, and creates in us a sense of demerit if we fail to comply with its demands. Further: when conscience announces this law, it makes no reference to the opinions of others, but sternly affirms, You ought so to do, though the whole world is against you. It utters its commands irrespective of all consequences, and even if the thought occurs, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" it refuses to relax the command, and visits the transgressor with a feeling of dissatisfaction. It simply says, You owe it to do this; and whatever hope may be suggested by reason as a consequence of obedience, it does not even make the command less stern by adding the promise, "This do, and thou shalt live." Every step in this process therefore proves that we are free, and not necessary agents.

The conception announces a binding law.

Conscience utters its commands irrespective of consequences.

Next, let us analyse what is given in the kindred affirmation of conscience when it utters the command, It is your duty to do, or to forbear doing, this or that. Observe: it does not say, "It is expedient so to do," or that it is pleasant, or that it will promote your highest happiness, or that obedience will not involve a painful act of

The significance of duty.

self-sacrifice; but irrespective of all such considerations, and despite of all consequences, it says, "It is your duty," *i.e.*, you owe it to do this, or that. To whom then do we owe it? Not to ourselves; for to owe a duty to ourselves is no real indebtedness, but a figure of speech. To owe a thing to ourselves bears a close resemblance to taking money from one pocket and putting it into another. The obligation, therefore, must centre in a Being who is external to ourselves. But we can owe nothing to a stock, a stone, or any kind of necessary agent; nor can a necessary agent owe anything to us. It follows, therefore, that both ourselves who owe, and the Being to whom we owe, must be possessed of a moral nature, *i.e.*, that both must be free agents. The idea of duty, therefore, advances a step beyond that of oughtness, and proclaims the existence of a God, who is not a mere force, but a moral being to whom man is ultimately responsible.

We do not owe duty to ourselves.

Obligation must centre in a Being who is external to ourselves, who, like ourselves, must be a free agent.

Conclusion.

Our conclusion therefore is, the idea of duty involves that of obligation; the idea of obligation, responsibility; the idea of responsibility, a power of self-determination; and a power of self-determination, a freedom within certain limits to act or to forbear acting; for without this freedom obligation, responsibility, and a power of self-determination are inconceivable.

The testimony of legislation.

Equally decisive is the testimony given by the whole course of legislation to the universality of

the belief that man is a free agent. All just legislation is based on the assumption of this truth. It looks not merely to the external act, but to the motive of the agent. Did the agent intend to do the act, or was it a mere accident over which he could exert no control? Thus the same result produced with intention may be the foulest of crimes; but if without intention, it is no crime, but a misadventure. Let us take an example: a man is found dead with a fractured skull. If the wound was inflicted with intention, and if the person who inflicted it knew what he was doing, the law pronounces the act murder; but if without intention or knowledge, it is an accident. The same principle is also universally acted on in private life. All men naturally raise a cry of injustice for punishing a man for what he could not help doing, or for what he did in ignorance or without intention; and however injurious the act may be to us personally, as soon as we are convinced that it was unintentional, our anger (which is really a desire to punish a wrong-doer for the wrong which he has inflicted) ceases. So likewise is it with respect to an act of one deranged. We put him under restraint for the purpose of preventing him from doing further mischief, but to punish him would be an outrage. In like manner we act with respect to animals. They are governed simply by impulse, and are incapable of rational

All just legislation is based on the assumption of man's free agency.

Illustration.

The principle acted on in private life.

We do not punish the deranged for their acts.

No one punishes a noxious animal.

A noxious man is held responsible.

Free agency or the absence of it constitutes the difference.

The testimony of the past experience of civilized man summarised.

choice. We therefore refuse to hold them responsible, however mischievous they may be. A noxious animal we kill to save ourselves and others from future danger, but no one thinks of punishing it as a responsible agent. But a noxious man we hold responsible; as such, we attach to him blame, and deem him justly deserving of punishment. What, I ask, is the reason of the different point of view with which we contemplate the same outward result, according as we view it as brought about with, or without, intention? The only possible answer is, the possession or the non-possession of free agency: for intention involves freedom to act or to forbear acting; and without it, it is destitute of meaning.

The testimony of the past experience of civilized man to our free agency may be briefly summarised thus: No freedom, no responsibility; no responsibility, no obligation; no obligation, no sense of duty; no sense of duty, no morality; no morality, no distinction between right and wrong. If one link on this chain fails, all sense of obligation ceases: the idea involved in the conception "I ought" is a delusion; duty is nothing but the necessity of yielding obedience to the strongest, *i.e.*, one whose sole claim to command is the power to punish us for disobedience, and human society becomes a mass of hopeless confusion.

Such are the facts to which the consciousness

and the conscience of civilized man have testified in every age. What, I ask, have necessitarians to set against them? I answer, not a single fact, but a number of theories respecting the origin of the facts, of *a priori* assumptions, which are incapable of verification, and of deductive reasonings founded upon them. But what is the value of such reasonings and assumptions when they come into collision with the primary facts of consciousness? We answer, in the words of a well-known phrase, "So much the worse for the theories and the assumptions." But if we are to accept the positions of necessitarians, civilized man, throughout all the ages of his existence, has been feeding on a delusion; and the fundamental groundwork of his thoughts, and the laws which have regulated his conduct, have been based upon a falsehood. Is this, I ask, credible? What, then, is the course which reason suggests when theories and reasonings such as those above referred to lead to conclusions which contradict the primary intuitions of our consciousness? Surely it is not to doubt the validity of our intuitions, but to question the truth of the assumptions, and the validity of the reasonings. Let us apply this principle to some of the most important of the theories and the reasonings of necessitarians.

Necessitarians have only *a priori* assumptions to set against the facts.

The course suggested by reason in the circumstances.

Necessitarian theories and reasonings.

The chief ground on which they affirm that our consciousness of free agency is a delusion is the

The chief assumption of the necessitarians.

assumption that nothing exists in the universe but matter and force; and that these, by their combined action, have evolved[1] every thing which exists, including man and his moral nature. From this the inference is drawn that man must be a necessary agent, because matter and force are necessary agents; and it is impossible that a thing can evolve out of itself, what was never in itself. The truth of this last position we fully admit; but as the highest certitudes of consciousness affirm that we are free agents—certitudes than which we have

The inference drawn.

[1] The term "evolution" as it is ordinarily used both in scientific and popular language, involves a very serious ambiguity. Its real meaning is "a rolling out from." Consequently, it is only possible to evolve out of a thing, some thing or quality which was originally in it, either in an active or passive state. Accretions, therefore, to a thing, are incorrectly spoken of as evolutions from that thing. But all growth, whether of vegetables or animals, involves an accretion to the original seed, *i.e.*, an introduction into it of something foreign to its nature, which it possesses the power of incorporating into its own substance. Such processes, therefore, are incorrectly designated evolutions. Thus scientific men are in the habit of speaking of one thing being produced out of another by a process which they designate evolution. Thus nothing is more common than the affirmation that man has been evolved out of some lower animal; and that by a process of this kind everything which has life has been produced during the indefinite ages of the past. But in cases like this, where extreme accuracy of thought is necessary, the expression is misleading; for even on the principles of the purest materialism, the original germs of life cannot by any possibility have evolved out of themselves all the forms of living things, which have existed in the past, or which exist in the present, except by the aid of a principle wholly different from evolution, viz., that of accretion and assimilation.

no greater certainty—it follows that the theory that man is nothing but the outcome of matter and force must be false. Or to put the same truth in a positive form, man must be the production of a force which is intelligent and free, *i.e.*, a Being must exist, who is distinct from the material universe, who is the author of the intellectual and moral nature of man.

The theory that man is nothing but the outcome of matter and force is false.

The above reply is equally applicable to the reasonings of the Agnostic, who, although not a theoretical, is a moral atheist, *i.e.*, while he admits that the belief in the existence of a first cause of the universe is a necessity of thought, he empties this concession of the smallest moral value by proclaiming that it is impossible to affirm anything respecting the real nature of this cause; that our knowledge is strictly limited to matter, its laws, and necessary forces, and that every thing in man is the outcome of their conjoint action.

The moral atheism of the Agnostic is met by the same reasoning.

Another theory has been propounded in support of the same position, that our various mental phenomena are modes of motion; and inasmuch as all motion is under the dominion of necessary law, that all the phenomena of mind must be necessary also; and consequently free agency can have no real existence.

The theory that our various mental phenomena are modes of motion.

With respect to these theories (for they are theories, and nothing more), I shall only observe that our conception of matter and its phenomena,

Our conception of matter and mind and their phenomena at opposite poles of thought.

and our conception of mind and its phenomena, occupy opposite poles of thought, which no ingenuity of philosophers or scientists has succeeded in bridging over. Although all sensations are the results of motions, yet it is an undoubted fact that no human being has succeeded in translating a motion into a sensation, or even in conceiving the possibility of doing so. In like manner an impassable gulf separates sensations from those mental functions which we designate intellectual; and one equally wide, separates both motions, sensations, and acts, purely intellectual, from those which we designate moral. Until the one can be translated into the other, and the gulf which separates the one class of conceptions from the other be bridged over, it will be sufficient to say with respect to the positions in question, Not proven; and we need not trouble ourselves with the plea so often urged by theorisers of all kinds, whenever they find themselves in difficulties, that although science has not yet succeeded in bridging over the different gulfs to which I have alluded, it will certainly do so at some period of the future. Our concern, I repeat it, is not with prophecies, nor with tendencies, but with actual present facts. Such facts are the presentations of consciousness above referred to; and until the above positions are proved to have a more substantial basis on which to rest than hopes, conjectures, and abstract theories, it is absurd

Mental functions designated intellectual separated by an impassable gulf from sensations.

to ask us to believe that we are living on delusions.

Further: some eminent men of science affirm that thought is a function of the brain, and nothing more. Assuming this position to be true, they urge that inasmuch as the brain is nothing but a mass of organized matter, and matter and its motions are subject to necessary laws, whatever results from their combined action, *i.e.*, all the phenomena of mind, must be equally necessary; and consequently free agency has no real existence.

The theory that thought is a function of the brain.

According to it the phenomena of mind are necessary.

But the premises do not justify the conclusion. Assuming all that physiologists affirm to have been proved, what does it amount to? This, and no more: that as we are at present constituted, the brain is the organ of thought, that every thought involves a corresponding movement in the brain; that within the limits of human experience, wherever a brain does not exist, thought is not; and wherever the brain is imperfect, thought is imperfect; and that mind can neither be made visible, weighed, or measured by the most delicate instrument which man has succeeded in inventing. All this may be conceded, yet it by no means proves that mind is a function of the brain, or that it and the brain are identical. All that it really proves is, that in the constitution of things which come under our observation, mind uses the brain as its instrument, and that mind and brain are so in-

The identity of mind and brain not proved.

timately correlated, that the mind cannot act without the brain. But it totally fails to prove that mind has no existence apart from the brain, or that under a different constitution of things it cannot act without one. Still less does it afford the smallest pretext for affirming that the innumerable adaptations with which the universe abounds, and the order which reigns throughout it, do not prove the existence of a mind which is capable of acting apart from all material limitations. This being so, it follows that there is nothing in the discoveries of physiologists respecting the nature and functions of the brain, which invalidates the testimony of consciousness to man's free agency, and his possession of a power of self-determination.

The testimony of consciousness to man's free agency not invalidated by the discoveries of physiologists respecting the nature and functions of the brain.

The last position which requires notice is the affirmation that the atoms, out of which all things have been evolved, contain in themselves the principles of life, intelligence, and freedom; or to state the same idea in the words of a well-known scientist, that matter contains in itself the potency of all things. We are therefore asked to accept as the foundation of a sound philosophy of man the astounding proposition, that a class of atoms exist which are capable of intelligence and self-determination; or else, if as units they are devoid of these powers, they are capable of producing such results when in combination, of which they were utterly destitute when out of combination, *i.e.*, all

The theory that atoms capable of intelligence and self-determination exist.

existing intelligence and morality. This theory is a theory pure and simple; without a single fact on which to rest, for not even the author of it pretends that an atom or a molecule of this kind has ever come within the range of his experience. With respect to it, the common sense of mankind will concur in thinking that atoms and molecules, which possess in themselves intelligence or freedom, or which are capable of evolving out of themselves in combination qualities of which they were utterly destitute when out of combination, must be very singular products of nature. Nay, it is impossible that they can have been such products, for, according to the theories of those against whose principles I am contending, such atoms must have been self-existent; for if they had a beginning, a Being must exist who originated them. This Being therefore, unless he was capable of imparting to them the qualities of freedom and intelligence, while he himself was bound by the iron law of necessity, must have possessed consciousness, free agency, and intelligence; and consequently must be the Author of these qualities as they exist in man. Further, as a free agent is a nobler being than a necessary agent (for to the latter we never assign praise or blame), if man is the production of a necessary agent, that necessary agent has been capable of producing a being greater and nobler than itself. But it will be unnecessary to

No atom or molecule of the kind has ever been discovered.

Such atoms must have been self-existent.

Their Creator must have possessed consciousness, free agency, and intelligence, and be the Author of these qualities in man.

discuss this theory further, for it practically concedes the point for which we are contending, viz., the existence of free agency and a power of self-determination, either in atoms, molecules, or in their results in combination.

The distinction instinctively felt between physical and moral agents proves that man is a free agent.

Once more: the distinction which all men instinctively feel between physical and moral agents, and between physical and moral laws, constitutes an overwhelming proof that man is a free, and not a necessary agent. A physical agent cannot break the law of its being: it acts as it does because it cannot help so acting; it is always trustworthy, it never yields to temptation, it never lies. Thus a piece of iron can only act in the same way, and will only act in the same way for ever under similar circumstances. Its actions, therefore, form an order of phenomena which never varies, which order we designate their law. Moral agents, on the contrary, act in conformity with a law of a wholly different character. Moral law, be it observed, is not the order of events as they actually are in the moral world, but the order of events as they ought to be. It contemplates an ideal, up to which the moral agent ought to act; and its conception involves the idea of an authority which has a right to command. At the back of physical laws there is force, and force only; at the back of moral law is not force, but authority. A physical law can be broken neither by a physical

Differences between physical and moral law.

nor a moral agent; a moral law can be broken by a moral agent. Physical agents can be neither persuaded nor tempted, nothing can divert them from their course but the action of superior force. Moral agents are precisely the reverse. Physical agents cannot impress their will on one another, for they have no will to impress. A moral agent can issue an order which another moral agent will feel it his duty to obey; but to all orders physical agents are deaf. But while no moral agent can violate the law of a physical agent, or induce it to violate its own law, it is capable by an act of its will, within certain limits, of diverting the course which a physical agent would pursue if left to itself, and making it do his pleasure. Thus for example, iron has been made man's obedient servant without once violating the law of its action. A piece of iron left to itself will not float, but man, without either violating or suspending its laws, can make it float; man cannot walk across the ocean, but he can construct an iron vessel which will carry him to the most distant lands, and make this unintelligent machine obedient to his will. Similarly electricity can neither hear, think, nor speak; if you ask it to convey a message for you, it will be deaf to your most earnest entreaty, yet man can so impress his will upon it as to make it his most faithful servant, and influence the actions of moral agents; and although moral agents when

Differences between physical and moral agents.

Examples.

separated from one another by thousands of miles cannot produce the smallest effect on one another, yet by using this unintelligent force as the instrument of his pleasure, a man can so affect other moral agents at this remote distance within a few minutes as may kindle a war which may last for years, and sacrifice lives by thousands. Numberless similar instances might be adduced, in which man makes physical agents the instruments of effectuating his will by diverting their forces into a direction different from that which they would pursue if they were left to themselves; nay more, he can even make them the agents of his will and the memorials of his existence long after he has passed from this earthly scene, and even the instruments of handing down to future generations the image of himself: what he thought, and what he did. So far, therefore, is it from being true that the influence of will is inappreciable, as necessitarians affirm, it is not only the most potent of all human agencies in the affairs of man, but it is capable of producing wholly different results in nature from those which its forces would have effected if they had been allowed to pursue their own course unmodified by man. In a word, moral agents have transformed the appearance of the globe, and have made it wholly different from what it would have been if its various physical agents had been left to pursue the course of their own undirected action.

Physical agents can be made the instruments of man's will.

The influence of will the most potent agency in human affairs.

What then do these and innumerable similar facts prove? I answer that man is a free, and not a necessary agent; that he is a self-determining cause of action, and not a machine which only differs from ordinary machines in that he is a machine possessed of life.

The facts prove that man is a self-determining cause of action.

The belief in necessitarianism therefore is founded on theories, assumptions, and abstract reasoning, *versus* facts; the belief in free agency is founded on facts, *versus* theories, assumptions, and abstract reasonings. Necessitarianism is the belief of the speculator only as long as he continues in his study; but the moment he enters the active world, he feels himself compelled to think, talk, and act on the assumption that he is a free agent, and the doctrine that man is a machine is felt to be a practical falsehood. It was said by an eminent Roman that he wondered, when two augurs met each other in the street, that they did not burst out laughing in one another's faces, so ridiculous was their art. We may almost wonder that two necessitarians do not do the same when they meet one another in practical life; but human credulity knows no bottom.

The necessitarian compelled to think, talk, and act in the world on the assumption that he is a free agent.

But the necessitarian philosophy involves issues of the most profound importance. If it is true, no God exists of whose existence man need take thought, there is no intelligent or moral government of the universe, but all things are directed

Issues of the necessitarian philosophy.

If this philosophy be true iron law prevails and there is no future retribution.

by an iron law of necessity, and by that concurrence of forces modifying one another's action, which in common language is designated chance; and no future existence for man in which the imperfections of the present moral order of things may be remedied hereafter, and the prosperous sinner be called to account for his conduct here. It will doubtless be urged that it is our duty to pursue truth to whatever consequences it may lead, to face them boldly; and not to take refuge in such a delusion as satisfied a thinker of the ancient world who avowed that if man perished at the stroke of death, and the hope of immortality was a delusion, he wished never to be set free from that delusion as long as he lived. But most men will be of opinion that if pessimism is true (and necessitarianism is pessimism), it is useless to talk of the duty of pursuing truth; and that the wisest thing for man is to make the best of his little day, and die; and if delusions can help him to enjoy it, so much the better, for the discovery of necessitarian truth will add to the certainty of suffering and dying, the pain of anticipating it. But we go further, and contend that if necessitarianism thus shakes to their foundation the principles of moral obligation on which society is based (as we are persuaded that it does); if it teaches that this ordered universe is the result of the action of unintelligent forces; that it has no

Pessimistic character of necessitarianism.

moral governor, and by consequence no moral order; and that the successful villain, whose astuteness has enabled him throughout life to evade the penalties which society would have inflicted on him, and the suffering and self-sacrificing saint will alike after the stroke of death sleep the sleep of unconsciousness, and be undisturbed by "their works following them;" that consequences such as these form one of the strongest reasons for believing that the theory is untrue. To us, and we think to all men who are not blinded by a theory, it will be simply unbelievable that a universe in which order and adjustments prevail to the degree in which they unquestionably prevail in the physical universe, should be destitute of moral adjustments, a moral order, and a moral force, which is capable of enforcing obedience to moral law, and of punishing transgressors for its violation; for nothing can be more certain than that neither of these can exist, if it will be alike to the evil and the good, after each has passed away from this earthly scene. If this be so, philosophers may preach what they please in defence of virtuous actions; but the overwhelming majority of mankind will draw the conclusion that the best practical rule of life will be to gratify one's own tastes (be they what they may) while it is possible to do so; and not to decline present gratification in the hope of the enjoyment of

The consequences form the strongest reason for believing the theory to be untrue.

It is unbelievable that such a universe as this should be destitute of moral order.

a greater though distant good, when owing to the uncertainty of life's duration, it is more than doubtful whether they shall live to realize it, and with the certainty that when life is ended, both the good and the bad will alike sleep the sleep of unconsciousness. If averages form a ground on which to base moral action, they prove that the number of those who live to realize their calculations, hopes, and expectations is comparatively small.

The necessitarian foundation of moral obligation is utilitarianism.

The ultimate foundation on which the necessitarian philosophy rests moral obligation is the principle of utilitarianism, or that course of action which is fitted to realize the greatest happiness of the individual.

It knows nothing of a Creator, of moral law, of human brotherhood, or a voice of conscience.

It knows nothing of a Creator, to whom is due love and service from the creature; nothing of a moral law, founded on His essential nature, and on man's relationship to Him; nothing of a moral governor, who cares for righteousness, and who is prepared to enforce it; nothing of human brotherhood, founded on man's relation to God, as a common Father; nothing of a voice of conscience, which is capable of speaking authoritatively and saying, This it is your duty to do; from this it is your duty to forbear, despite of all consequences which may happen to yourself; nothing of a future state, in which man shall be rewarded or punished for his conduct here. On the contrary, according to its pronouncements, the consequences

of actions, be they good or be they bad, are confined to this present life; beyond it, the good have nothing to hope, and the bad have nothing to fear. All other foundations of moral obligation it dismisses as no better than old wives' fables.

Utilitarianism resolves virtuous conduct into a calculation of consequences.

Utilitarianism, therefore, or the pursuit of our greatest happiness, viewed as a standard of moral obligation, resolves right, *i.e.*, virtuous conduct, into a calculation of consequences. According to this theory, each individual is compelled to pursue that line of conduct which in his opinion will conduce to his greatest happiness, *i.e.*, which will afford him the greatest amount of pleasure. But inasmuch as there is no higher authority to appeal to than the taste of the individual, and the degree of his insight into the future consequences of his actions, opinions may, and do differ widely as to the line of conduct which will realize this result. The utilitarian philosopher affirms that the effort to realize the happiness of others is the one only certain road of realizing the happiness of ourselves. This makes virtuous conduct simply a matter of accurate calculation and good taste; and vicious conduct the reverse. But the overwhelming majority of mankind think very differently; and all that this philosophy can do is to hope for their gradual enlightenment. A small number of select individuals may accept the utilitarian standard, and try to live by it; but there is no reason why

The utilitarian road to happiness.

Practical effect of utilitarianism.

men who are endowed with a less accurate power of calculating the contingencies of the future should not arrive at a different conclusion; and inasmuch as each individual is responsible to himself alone, and there is no hereafter to be the subject of hope or dread, why a man should not arrive at the conclusion that the most certain way of realizing one's own happiness amid the chances of this uncertain world is to make the best of life's little day by grasping at present gratification, each according to his tastes,—the contemplative man in contemplation; the elevated man in what he considers great and noble; the average man in the ordinary pleasures of life; and the sensualist in sensual indulgence; or to express the same idea in language borrowed from the Apostle, let us each, according to our respective tastes, "eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."

According to it, it is a man's misfortune, not his sin, to be bad.

According, therefore, to the principles of this philosophy, for a man to be a bad man is neither his sin, nor his crime, but his misfortune. It is simply, to start with a taste for a particular class of pleasures, and in addition to be a bad calculator of the consequences which will follow from their indulgence. If right conduct is the pursuit of a course of action which a man believes will realize his own greatest happiness, it cannot be denied that the immoral man seeks to realize this, only he mistakes the way of doing it, and is a bad calculator of the means by which it can be realized. His tastes

lead him to desire present gratification without any regard of the source from which it comes; and his powers of calculation are so defective that he is unable to assure himself of the truth of what the utilitarian philosopher affirms, viz., that he will realize his greatest happiness by denying his appetites, instead of gratifying them; or by pursuing what is more elevated, rather than by yielding to his passions. But in good truth, if the only test of virtue is actions which tend to realize our greatest happiness, and if the test of happiness is pleasure, then it is in vain to talk of actions or of pleasures more or less elevated than others, for in that case all can be estimated by one standard only, viz., the amount of pleasure which they yield to the individual. Bad taste, therefore, and a bad power of calculation are the only fault of him whom men have concurred to designate a bad man; or it may be a want of power to pursue what he is convinced in his understanding is a greater, though distant good, at the expense of present gratification, of self-denial, and it may be of present suffering. But all this is his misfortune, and not his sin.

Bad taste and bad power of calculation the only faults of a bad man, according to it.

What, I ask, will be the effect of persuading the masses of mankind that the only distinction between actions as good or bad is their tendency to realize the greatest happiness of the individual, and through the individual of the race; and that the foundations on which moral obligation

Consequences of persuading men to accept the utilitarian standard.

have hitherto been supposed to rest, are no better than a quagmire? Past experience proves that to this question there can be only one answer, viz., that each man will consider himself to be entitled to do what he lists, provided he has sufficient astuteness to enable him to avoid the penalties which society would inflict upon him for the breach of its laws, for, according to the principles against which I am contending, the greatest sinner has nothing to fear beyond the grave; and society can only deal with him while he lives. If, therefore, a villain is sufficiently astute to avoid detection (and many villains are thus astute), he need fear no qualms of conscience; all that he has done has been, that he has done as best he could to realize what according to the light which was in him he considered to be his own greatest happiness, and this he has succeeded in accomplishing. The means by which he has effected it are a pure matter of indifference; and when a successful life of crime has come to a termination, this philosophy assures him that his sleep of unconsciousness will be equally undisturbed as that of a Howard or a St. Paul. Truly, if these principles represent the realities of things, the holy, the good, and the self-sacrificing are of all men the most foolish and the most miserable.

The testimony of experience.

The villain escapes if astute enough to avoid detection.

But another important consequence follows. Full well it may be asked, if necessitarianism is true, what right has society to inflict penalties

for the violation of its laws? The transgressor of them may justly urge, I have only done what I could not help doing, *i.e.*, I have acted on the most powerful motive, which in my case was the desire of a present gratification, which seemed to me to promise a far greater degree of happiness than by exercising a painful restraint to realize some distant but uncertain good, which owing to the uncertainty of life I may never live to enjoy. I am no philosopher or profound calculator; and whatever such may preach, it seems to me to be wiser to act on the old adage, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." The only answer which society can return is, Strength is right, and right is strength. I have strength, and by the right of strength I deal with every violator of my laws, and with every one who inflicts on me an inconvenience. I deal with transgressors as I deal with noxious animals. Some, if convenient, I restrain; on others I inflict pain; others, if more convenient to me, I kill. My sole object is to free myself from the inconveniences which you occasion; and to effect this I seek to render it less pleasurable to you to violate my laws than to observe them.

The system deprives society of the right to inflict penalties for breach of laws.

It can only deal with them as noxious animals.

But the utilitarian principle of altruism, or that the realization of the greatest happiness of the greatest number will be attended with the realization of the greatest happiness of self is no new discovery. It is neither more nor less than one of

Altruism no new discovery.

the old laws of the kingdom of God, but deprived of all the sanctions by which it can be enforced. Yet we are invited to believe that altruism is a great improvement on the now worn-out Christian law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, mind, soul, and strength;" and, consequent on this, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and on the new commandment, to love one another as Christ has loved us. All that the utilitarian philosopher has really effected is, to divest these commandments of all moral power, by proclaiming that there is no God whom we need regard, no Christ to love, and no hereafter to fear.

Utilitarianism has divested Christian law of all moral power.

But if this philosophy is the sole foundation on which morality is to be based, I ask, how is this principle of altruism to be generated? It cannot be generated by invoking the principle of evolution, for it is one of its fundamental principles that primitive man was altogether selfish, and that everything in civilized man which is not so is an after-growth. How, then, can the disinterested love of others be evolved out of a being whose one distinguishing characteristic is pure love of self? Many are the shifts to which utilitarianism has recourse, such as the family, and the tribal feeling; but it may be justly asked, whence came these? How did they originate in a being whose moral constitution, if he had any, was selfishness pure and simple. The truth must be spoken; unless it is

How is altruism to be generated?

The shifts of utilitarianism.

possible to evolve out of a thing that which was never in it; if altruism is to be generated in a being, of whom love of self is the one distinguishing moral characteristic, recourse must be had to a power different from evolution; for if evolution goes on evolving for endless ages, selfishness can never generate sacrifice of self. Such a power Christianity affirms that it possesses; but it is this very power which the utilitarian philosophy ignores. What has it to substitute in its place? This, and nothing more, the aphorism, that the pursuit of the happiness of others for its own sake is the most noble of human pursuits. But what right has the utilitarian to talk of the more or less noble in action, when the only distinction between virtuous and vicious actions is their tendency to realize pleasure or pain. Cordially will Christians assent to the truth of altruism, when it is once admitted that there is a God, who is the moral Governor of the universe, and a future state of retribution; but this is the very thing which utilitarianism refuses to admit into its calculations. Yet if the calculation be limited to the results of actions in this life, not only will it be a matter of extreme difficulty accurately to balance the pleasures with which the effort to realize the happiness of others is attended, against those which follow the indulgence of the passions which terminate in self, but the final result will be extremely doubtful,

Christianity possesses the power which utilitarianism ignores.

Christians will accept the truth of altruism when it is admitted that there is a God and a future state of retribution

and will in no small degree be dependent on the taste of the individual. But this is not all; for even if the balance should be ultimately pronounced to be in favour of acting on the principle of altruism, so intricate would be the calculation, and so doubtful its results, that it would leave it destitute of a moral power sufficient to outweigh those impulses which urge the overwhelming majority of mankind to prefer present gratification to the chance of greater, but more distant good. One thing is certain; not one in a hundred thousand of mankind has been induced to act on this principle during the ages of the past. It may be a beautiful theory as long as the philosopher confines himself to his study; but as soon as he issues into the hard world of fact, it is felt to be powerless to act on the masses of mankind. Philosophers may assure us that if only men will yield themselves to their guidance it will realize a millennium. This we shall not dispute; for it is the fundamental principle of Christianity that mutual love is the highest happiness of man; but under the utilitarian system the difficulty consists in making this "if" a reality, because it renounces the whole of that mighty moral power which Christianity brings to bear on the human heart, and has nothing to substitute for it but the results of an uncertain calculation, which may vary according to the tastes of the individual.

A beautiful theory for the study, but not for the hard world of fact.

It has no substitute for the moral power of Christianity which it rejects.

The utilitarian system of morality, therefore, reduces virtue and vice to a matter of calculation. Its moral, holy, and good man (if such terms have any right to a place in its vocabulary), is nothing but a good calculator of the consequences of actions, and who has sufficient strength of will to act on his calculations, notwithstanding all the solicitations of his passions to the contrary. Its immoral man, on the contrary, is a bad calculator, or one who, if he calculates rightly, is unable to resist the force of temptation. As a system of morality, therefore, it can recognize neither crime nor sin. What in the ordinary language of mankind is designated moral wickedness, in accordance with its principles, is nothing more than the misfortune of *possessing a bad taste, and imperfect power of calculating the consequences of actions.* If a man can see his way, therefore, to avoid the penalties which society would inflict upon him for the violation of its laws, and if the result of his calculation is that he will realize his own greatest happiness by the practice of villainy and fraud, what, I ask, is to hinder him from so doing? All other moral considerations being swept away under the teachings of this philosophy, does not such a successful villain almost realize the standard of utilitarian virtue? or if not virtue, who can blame him? for he has only done what seemed to him to be best fitted to realize his own greatest good.

The good man of utilitarianism is a good calculator of the consequences of actions.

Moral wickedness, according to it, is only the misfortune of having a bad taste, and imperfect power of calculating the consequences of actions.

The successful villain realizes the standard of utilitarian virtue.

What necessitarian philosophy sweeps away.

The position of things, therefore, stands thus. The necessitarian philosophy sweeps away free agency in man, and the power of self-determination; undermines the foundations on which existing systems of moral obligation are based, and thus destroys every moral power which can be exerted on man for good. Having effected this destruction,—a destruction so great that even some of those who have aided in effecting it have expressed alarm at the immediate consequences with which it may be attended—an attempt has been made to erect a moral edifice on the principles of utilitarianism.

Its moral edifice is built on a foundation of sand.

But this, as we have proved, is a building erected on the sand, being a system destitute of all moral power to influence the masses of mankind. What, I ask, will they care about the condition of posterity some million years hence, when they have ceased from conscious existence? for even utilitarians admit that their promised millennium will only be realized at some indefinitely remote period of the future, when the personal consciousness of the generation now living, and of numbers yet to come has been swallowed up in the mighty Το παν. Yet even in doing this the necessitarian philosophy is compelled to commit an act of suicide, viz., to assume the truth of that which it is its fundamental principle to deny. This it does whenever it affirms that it is a duty to pursue a more distant good, rather than a present gratification; for

It is compelled to assume the truth of that which it is its fundamental principle to deny.

this act involves choice; choice involves freedom; and freedom, before the course of action chosen can become effect, involves an act of volition and self-determination. Man, therefore, on its own showing is a free agent. True it is that man cannot estimate the precise degree of responsibility which attaches to his brother man,—the question is one far too complicated for our finite understandings; but the Judge of all the earth can, for He not only knows all the conditions of the case, but can penetrate to the secrets of the heart; and we may feel confident that He who has implanted the sense of rectitude and justice in our moral nature, will Himself certainly judge in conformity with that which is right and just. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Man is, on its own showing, a free agent.

God only can estimate the degree of individual responsibility, and will do right.

But, as I have observed above, the boasted altruism of modern anti-Christian philosophy is no new discovery, being neither more nor less than the old commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," divested of the sanctions by which it was enforced. But even the old commandment was "weak through the flesh," and was incapable of imparting a spiritual power adequate to overcome the evil which exists in man. What, I ask, has altruism done to remedy this defect? The answer must be, All that it has done has been to remove the imperfect supports on which the old commandment rested. As a spiritual power

it is, and ever must be, powerless. But such a power it is the express end and purpose of Christianity to supply. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" has been, and ever must be, the cry both of the Legalist and the Altruist in their strivings to realize the commandment. But Christianity returns the answer, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."[1]

[1] Rom. vii. 24, 25; viii. 2-4. (Revised Version.

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